



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

National Marine Fisheries Service

P.O. Box 21668

Juneau, Alaska 99802-1668

December 27, 2007

Mr. Chris Oliver, Executive Director
North Pacific Fishery Management Council
605 W. 4th Avenue #306
Anchorage, Alaska 99501-2252

Dear Mr. Oliver:

Thank you for your letter requesting our evaluation of a proposal by the State of Alaska (State) to manage a pollock fishery within the State waters of Kanaga Sound. The North Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) requested an evaluation of the proposal to determine if it has independent merit and could be implemented outside the ongoing Endangered Species Act Section 7 consultation process for the Alaska groundfish fisheries or if it should be included with proposals being evaluated by the Steller Sea Lion Mitigation Committee (SSLMC). We have reviewed the proposal and have enclosed a brief description of our concerns for Steller sea lions and their critical habitat.

Based on the concerns identified in the enclosure, the potential impacts from the proposed Kanaga Sound pollock fishery on Steller sea lions and their critical habitat are not *de minimus*. As requested by the Council, we will cease analysis of this proposal.

The SSLMC is scheduled to begin evaluation of proposed Steller sea lion protection measures revisions in January 2008. Proposal 35 is for a State-managed pollock fishery for 3,000 mt between 174° W longitude and 178° W longitude, which includes Kanaga Sound. Information will be provided to the committee to inform the analysis of Proposal 35, and this information also may be used to consider the proposed pollock fishery at Kanaga Sound.

We appreciate the State providing the Council and NMFS the opportunity to review the Kanaga Sound proposal. We look forward to continuing cooperation with the Council and the State in development of potential changes to the Steller sea lion protection measures for the groundfish fisheries.

Sincerely,

 for J/B

Dr. James W. Balsiger
Administrator, Alaska Region

Enclosure



Cc: Melvin Morris, Alaska BOF
Jim Marcotte, Alaska BOF
Eric Olson, NPFMC

Mnbrown: 12/17/07

Jschuerer: 12/19/07

Ssalveson: 12/18/07

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